

**General Assembly**

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Fifty-third session**Agenda item 40****The situation in the Middle East****Letter dated 15 July 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

On instructions from my Government and further to our earlier letter concerning Lebanese detainees in the prisons of the Israeli occupation forces (A/53/1016-S/1999/771), I have the honour to communicate to you the information hereunder.

On the eve of Lebanese Detainee Day, 14 July, the Lebanese hostages being held at the Khiyam prison declared a hunger strike in order to protest against their continued detention in Israeli prisons. A bloody confrontation took place in the prison yard between detainees and Israeli occupation forces as a result of which five detainees had to be taken to Marj Uyun hospital. They were: Mustafa Tawba, Riyad Kalakish, Husayn Aqil, Ali Ghazi Safir and Sulayman Ramadan.

The Committee for the Defence of Lebanese Detainees in Israeli Prisons has stated in a communiqué that 130 Lebanese are still being detained in Khiyam prison, which is administered by the South Lebanon Army in collaboration with the Israeli enemy, and that there are 21 Lebanese being held in prisons inside Israel, including some who were incarcerated without trial more than 10 years ago and some who have served their sentences but whose detention is extended by administrative decision of the Israeli authorities every six months.

The Lebanese detainees, whether in Khiyam prison or in prisons inside Israel, are being held hostages by the Israeli authorities in violation of all the relevant international

covenants and conventions. They are being held without regard for any law, and they do not enjoy the basic rights for which provision is made in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention against Torture and the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. That Israel has legitimized the taking of hostages in its laws constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and sets a precedent that is the first of its kind, given that on 12 November 1997 the Supreme Court of Israel ruled that the Lebanese detainees are hostages and represent a bargaining chip. It has never before happened that a court of law has sanctioned the taking of hostages.

In bringing these repeated Israeli practices to your attention, I request you to make every possible effort for the release of the Lebanese detainees in Israeli prisons.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a United Nations document.

(Signed) Selim Tadmoury
Permanent Representative

